



**NATIONAL SURVEY
OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES**

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from the INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN, POVERTY, AND HOMELESSNESS

Alaska had an estimated 237 homeless families on a single night in 2009, with providers serving seven times their bed capacity over the course of the year.¹ This brief summarizes some of the state's public and private initiatives to assist these families.

State Taskforce on Homelessness

Taskforce: The Alaska Council on the Homeless (established by executive order in 2004) monitors and reviews implementation of the state's ten-year plan to end homelessness.

Governor's Appointee: Daniel Fauske, CEO and Executive Director of the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, has chaired the Alaska Council on the Homeless since its inception in 2004.



Demographic Summary and Overview of Regional Organization

	Alaska	Anchorage
Persons in homeless families ²	753	446
Number of family shelter beds ³	651	280
Persons in homeless families (per 10,000 population in families) ⁴	27	39
Percent of families in poverty ⁵	10.50%	9.24%
10-Year plan date approved or implemented	2005	2005
10-Year plan target population	All	All
Point-in-time count frequency	Annually	Annually
Point-in-time count managing agency	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managing agency	Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services	Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services
Main organizing agency or Continuum of Care (CoC) lead applicant	Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness*	Anchorage Coalition on Homelessness

*Corresponds to the Balance of State Continuum of Care, which comprises areas of Alaska that are not included in a regional or local CoC.

Extreme Conditions on the Last Frontier

Homeless and at-risk families in Alaska face a unique set of infrastructural and natural conditions. In outlying areas, few shelters are available for homeless families that are not victims of domestic violence. When doubled-up arrangements end, service providers' options are often limited to offering transportation assistance to either other friends' or relations' communities or to the Municipality of Anchorage.⁶ In addition, these families face high rent and utility bills due to a lack of affordable housing and the high costs of transporting crude oil to regions not connected to the railroad system.⁷ These factors, along with the recession, have prompted some at-risk families to migrate to Anchorage. The influx of homeless and at-risk families has contributed to a 60.4% increase in the number of persons in homeless families (from 278 to 446) between 2007 and 2009. Concurrently, the number of persons in homeless families has risen only 6.6% (from 288 to 307) in the rest of the state.⁸ During the winter of 2009–10, family shelters in Anchorage were filled to capacity, with more families in need on wait lists. The increase in

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The *National Survey of Programs and Services for Homeless Families* is an online resource for service providers, advocates, researchers, and public policy makers working in the field of family homelessness. The Web site provides a state-by-state snapshot of the interconnections between governmental and nonprofit work to end family homelessness. For additional information on Alaska and other states visit www.icprwb.org

families seeking assistance and overnight deaths among unsheltered homeless individuals prompted Anchorage to adopt its Cold Weather Plan for Homeless Persons in September 2010. When the ambient or wind-chill temperature is at or below freezing, the plan exempts approved churches from certain zoning regulations to enable them to provide shelter for families and sober individuals.⁹

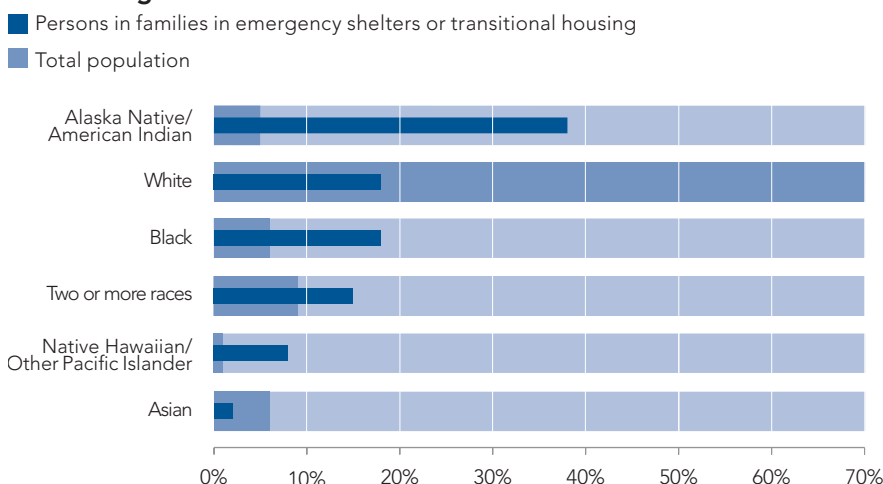
Food Pantries Statewide

In 2009, Mathematica Policy Research, a for-profit company, conducted agency and client surveys at 179 Food Bank of Alaska member organizations, including 110 food pantries. Mathematica estimated that Food Bank of Alaska food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters served 77,200 unique clients over the course of a year. Of the 226 pantry clients interviewed, over two-fifths (42.9%) were members of households with children younger than age 18. Eight percent lived in a motel or hotel, 5.3% resided doubled up with family or friends, and 1.5% were literally homeless (staying in a shelter or a place not intended for human habitation). In addition to providing food, most pantries (71.2%) offered other forms of aid, such as clothing (44.6%), transportation (29.5%), and utility bill assistance (17.9%).¹⁰

Vocational Training at the Fairbanks Rescue Mission

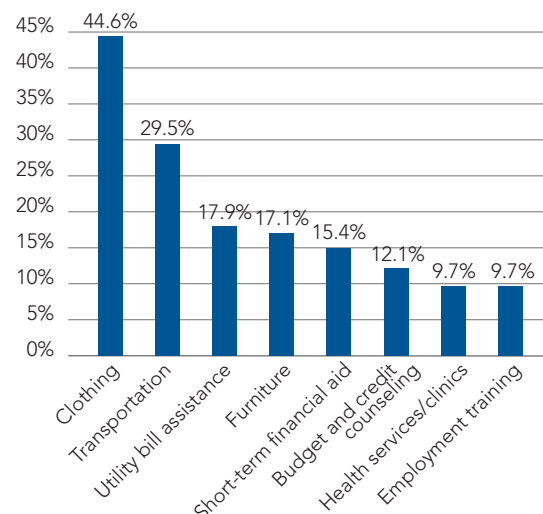
The Fairbanks Rescue Mission (FRM), a non-profit organization, is the only emergency shelter within an area of 90,000 square miles that serves the Fairbanks North Star Borough and its surrounding rural regions. In 2009, FRM provided 29,412 nights of shelter, including 4,227 nights for children. Many of the organization's adult clients are able to find and attain employment, but experience difficulty maintaining a position. Hence, FRM's Workplace Skills Training program focuses on the skills necessary for job retention while providing participants with a stipend. FRM generates funding and provides work experience for its clients through management of Twin Bears Camp (roughly \$20,000 in 2009), a state park facility, and FRM's Recycling Center (about \$50,000), which serves 200 businesses (with an additional 220 residential users each weekend). Clients also receive vocational training through FRM's on-site butchery, where they prepare moose (approximately 4.5 tons annually) donated by the Division of Alaska State Troopers and other game provided by community members for consumption on location at the dining facility.¹¹

Racial Composition of Homeless Families and the Total Population in Anchorage



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, AHAR Exchange Public Reports: 2009 Comprehensive Report of Sheltered Homeless Persons; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.

Percentage of Food Pantries in the Food Bank of Alaska Network Providing Other Services (by type of service)



Source: Mathematica Policy Research, *Hunger in America 2010: Local Report Prepared for The Food Bank of Alaska*.

Endnotes

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's 2009 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Homeless Populations and Subpopulations; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, AHAR Exchange Public Reports: 2009 Comprehensive Report of Sheltered Homeless Persons.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*.
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- Kris Duncan, (Homeless Planner, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation), interview with ICPH, December 2010.
- Rebekah Lührs, "Power Cost Equalization: Providing Affordable Electricity in Rural Communities: A Series About Energy in Rural Alaska, Part 2 of 4," *Rural CAP's Village Voices*, Winter 2009.
- Joshua Saul, "Homelessness on the Rise in Anchorage Schools," *Alaska Dispatch*, October 5, 2009; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, *Statewide Homeless Survey: Winter 2007*; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, *Anchorage Homeless Count—January 2009*; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, *Alaska CoC Homeless Count—January 2009*.
- Daniel A. Sullivan to Anchorage Assembly, memorandum, May 25, 2010, *An Ordinance Amending Anchorage Municipal Code Title 16 to Enact a New Chapter Regarding the Cold Weather Plan for Homeless Persons*; Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services, *Cold Weather Plan for Homeless Persons*, September 2010.
- Mathematica Policy Research, *Hunger in America 2010: Local Report Prepared for The Food Bank of Alaska*.
- Rodney Gaskins (Executive Director, Fairbanks Rescue Mission), interview with ICPH, December 2010; Fairbanks Rescue Mission, <http://www.fairbanksrescuemission.org>